



Report to the Auburn City Council

Action Item

Agenda Item No. **7**

[Signature]
City Manager's Approval

To: Mayor and City Council Members
From: City Councilor Holmes
Date: June 24, 2013
Subject: Restoration of the Neff Fountain

The Issue

Shall the City Council approve the restoration of the Neff Fountain?

Recommendation:

By **MOTION**, approve the dismantling of the Neff Fountain and shipment to a qualified restorer and remounting of the fountain after restoration. A public subscription effort will be made to fund the restoration. Consider an eventual option of transferring the fountain to the County of Placer.

Background

The Neff Fountain was a gift to the City of Auburn in 1908 by Jacob Neff, (see attachment) a former Lieutenant Governor of California and prominent citizen of the Auburn area. It was made by the Mott Iron Works located in New York/New Jersey. The fountain was originally used as a drinking fountain for horses and people visiting the Placer County Court House and was located in the middle of the intersection of Maple Street and Lincoln Way. It was also lighted at night.

During the construction of Auburn-Folsom Road the fountain was moved in 1976 to its present location on Placer County property.

Recent inspections by qualified restorers have indicated that the fountain is deteriorating internally as evidenced by observations at various parts of the structure and is in serious need of restoration and re-electrification.

Fiscal Impact

A special fund will be established through the Placer County Historical Society, a 501 C3 non-profit, to raise the funds for the restoration. Prior to any physical work on the fountain a complete estimate will be obtained and fundraising events will be scheduled to ensure enough funds to complete the project. Some staff time may be required to oversee the dismantling and eventual remounting of the fountain.

Attachment: Background on Jacob Neff

Attachment: Photo of 1976 move

Jacob Hart Neff

Most people in Auburn are familiar with the old fountain that sits in front of the historic Placer County Courthouse. A few even know that it is called "the Neff fountain." Very few, however, know the story of the man who donated the fountain to the City of Auburn in 1908.

Jacob Neff was born in Strausburg, Pennsylvania on October 13, 1830, when he was but a lad the family moved to Iowa territory and young Jacob was apprenticed to a blacksmith and learned that trade. As a young man of twenty Neff set out for the gold fields of California. *Placer Herald 4-3-1909*

Jacob Hart Neff arrived in Hangtown (Placerville) on August 8th of 1850, he describes the trials of the five month journey, saying "suffice it to say that, after enduring unusual hardships, culminating in the loss of our stock....we arrived on foot." He was very typical of the 49'ers who flocked to California hoping to strike it rich. The vast majority did not but Jacob Neff became a very successful miner and made several fortunes over his lifetime. He eventually turned to politics and became the Lieutenant Governor of the state. *Placer Herald 4-3-1909*

Neff led a very busy and eventful life. Here is a brief break-down of his life and accomplishments by the decade.

Neff most likely made his first fortune in the very earliest days of the Gold Rush as he is said to have begun his work in California "with a rocker." Although Neff stated in his autobiography that he "mined until 1863" as early as 1851 he obtained a liquor license in Elizabethtown. From his earliest days in California, Neff was very involved in the Masonic Fraternity. He was a charter member of Wisconsin Hill Lodge No. 74 and assisted in organizing Ionic Lodge No. 121 in Iowa Hill. He would continue allegiance to the Masons throughout his life achieving its highest offices. *Collection.museumca.org – Neff Loving cup, Placer Herald 4-3-1909 – S. F. Call 8-25-1898 – Retail Licenses*

In 1863, he, with partners Ben Taylor and the Coleman Brothers began construction of the Illinoistown to Grass Valley toll-road.

Towards the end of the 1860's, he ran for Sheriff of Placer County and won. He kept that seat from 1867 to 1869. *History of Placer County pg. 128 & 162*

In the 1870's he was running the Empire Livery Stable in Auburn and had a house where Bootlegger's Restaurant now stands. He was elected, on the Republican ticket, to the State Senate. He was part of the group of local men who constructed the Auburn race track in 1871 and was involved with both the Colfax and Auburn Masons. In that same year he helped organize the Auburn Brass Band and is reported to have purchased the instruments and music for the group. He owned the large armory building in Auburn and sold it to the band organization. In 1875 he became a member of the State Prison Board. Always involved in mining he was the superintendent of the Rising Sun mine near Colfax in 1875. *Bill of sale Bk. A pg. 73 - History of Placer Co. - Placer Herald 4-15-1871 Deed Bk. T pg. 267*

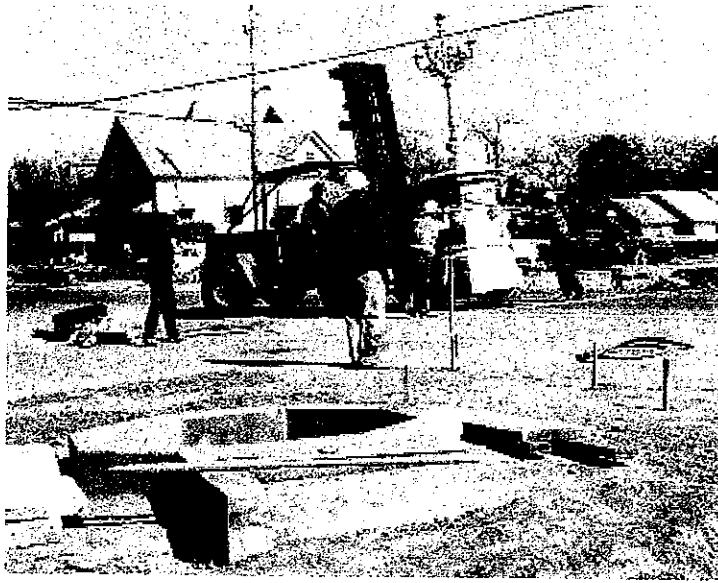
Never leaving the "gold business" he was involved with the hugely successful Pioneer Mine in Humbug Canyon in the 1880's. During the 1880's he seems to have maintained residences in both Auburn (the old Walkup place across from the Catholic Church) and remodeled an 1850's house in Colfax. During this period he and his nephew and partner, Henry Disque, owned a store at the Dutch Flat station. In 1887 Neff and several other Auburn men founded the Placer County Bank. In 1888 he and others were involved in seeking a franchise for establishing a gas works for the town of Auburn. *History of Placer Co. Argus- 5-12-1888 - Assessment Rolls - Argus 9-20-1899 - District Court # 3177 - Superior Court # 583*

Always known for his generosity, Neff presented a bell to the congregation of the new Episcopal Church in Auburn in 1890. Perhaps Neff's greatest success was his involvement with the California Miner's Association. In 1891 he organized a miner's convention in Auburn with the aim to establish a state organization. He was successful and was president for six years. He is credited with forming an alliance between the valley's farmers and the miners with the Caminetti Act of 1893. The animosity and litigation between the two groups had been increasing hostile for many years over the amount of debris resulting from hydraulic mining that inundated the valley's rivers and streams. It has been estimated that 1.5 billion

cubic yards of debris washed into the central valley. The Yuba River once navigable between San Francisco and Marysville became impossible for steamboat travel and the bed of the river raised to above the elevation of the town. During the 1890's, Neff was also involved in the Morning Star Drift Mine in Iowa hill and the Rising Sun mine near Colfax. Both of these were very successful enterprises. *Placer Herald* 12-27-1890 – *History of Placer Co.* pg. 217 – *Morning Call* 1-28-1894 – Yuba – *Sutter wiki.org* – *Edward Benjamin – Mines Book* – 1899 pg. 406 *Placer Herald* 11-1891

In 1899, Neff was elected Lt. Governor under Henry T. Gage. It is said that "he went into politics with a good name and came out with a good name." He moved to San Francisco in 1900 when he took office. Along with him were his nephew Henry Disque and Thomas Woods, his long time mining partner. Never forgetting his devotion to Placer County he donated the fountain to the City of Auburn in 1908. *S. F. Call* 3-29-1909 – *Placer Herald* 8-8-1908 – *Placer Herald* 5-16-1908

Neff died in San Francisco in March of 1909. Special cars were added to the train to the City to bring the hundreds of Placer County friends to Neff's funeral. The accolades to Neff at his passing are very telling. The San Francisco Call dubbed him "one of the most highly esteemed citizens of California. The Call also noted that "the poor know where his fortune has gone." Delivering his eulogy, the Rev. George Adams noted, "He had a natural way of winning men's hearts, but above all his fellow men believed in him. It is a great thing to be beloved, but a far better thing to be believed in." *S.F. Call* – 3-27-1909



6/8/2013



To: Placer County Museums Division
 Department of Facility Services
 101 Maple Street
 Auburn, CA 95603

Attn: Melanie Barton

Re: Courthouse Street Light

May 29th 2013

Below is our proposal for the restoration of 1 street light fixture for Placer County Museum Division.

ID #	Description	Quantity	Per unit	Total
EX	5-light exterior post standard	1	15,000.00	15,000.00
EX	8-panel base (remove, restore, install)	1	45,000.00	45,000.00
RI	Removal and installation of post standard	1	1,200.00	1,200.00
FRT	Pick-up and delivery		0.00	0.00
			Sub Total	61,200.00
			Grand Total	61,200.00

The restoration of 1 exterior post light fixture and base for Placer County Museums will take approximately 400 hours of labor to restore. Price includes all lamps, shades, zinc plating, painting, delivery and consultation. The estimated time of completion and delivery of fixture is 160 days from date of removal. All lighting work performed by Quality Lighting for Placer County Museums Division and the Department of Facility Services will be guaranteed for 2 years from the date of delivery. Fixture will be UL labeled and Hipot high voltage tested in our Grass Valley, CA workshop. A certificate of insurance will be given upon request to the owner or its agents if awarded the lighting contract.

Respectfully submitted

Paul Ivazes, Quality Lighting